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THE ORGANIZATION OF AN INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC ASSOCIATION.

SEVERAL months ago *Science* published an editorial on the proposed foundation of an International scientific association. Since that first public announcement of the project, interest in it has deepened and spread. There is now in circulation, for additional signatures, a request supported by some of the leading scientific men of America, and addressed to the two national associations which meet on our side of the ocean this year. This request is to the effect that the two bodies shall consider the advisability of forming an international association: it is therefore appropriate to consider the grounds upon which we may advocate the execution of the proposal.

There are many persons who have long held the conviction that some regular opportunity for international intercourse between scientific men, bringing them from all countries into personal contact with one another, would be equally useful and pleasant. The only feasible manner yet suggested, so far as I am aware, of insuring the desired opportunities, is to establish an international society after the general type of the national associations and the international congresses, such as the medical, geological, etc.,—organizations which have already justified their existence by the good they have accomplished. It is believed that the time has now come for extending habitual scientific co-operation beyond the limits of each country, to all those that are active in the promotion of science. Moreover, the manifold sciences of the present have so many common interests, that the welfare of each is inseparable from the welfare of all; and therefore, when they all unite for the common good, will the highest purposes of knowledge be best served. This it is which renders a general scientific congress more advisable than a number of special ones. The body of wider purpose would also represent more fitly the full dignity of science.

What advantages may be expected from the proposed International scientific association? Foremost must be placed, I think, the opportu-

nities for personal intercourse between men of the same interests, but who, living in countries wide apart, would otherwise never meet. Experience amply demonstrates the reality of the interest and advantage of contact, direct and immediate, of mind to mind, which affords an insight into another's way of thought otherwise impossible. This is because conversation enables one to get by a short cut to the pith of thought, and to secure an explanation of just whatever has been obscure in the conceptions of another. The action of others' minds becomes understood as it never can be from books. New points of view open up, and the error of the personal equation is diminished. Another advantage must be sought in the meeting of specialists of different branches, who mutually inform one another of the living interests of each other's science. The importance of the actual sessions lies in the discoveries and discussions filling them, and is so well recognized that this allusion is sufficient. As the association will have great dignity and high standing in all countries, it will be appropriate for it to undertake the adjustment of many of the international interests of science, such as the unification of standards, and other affairs requiring the concerted action of separate nations. The establishment of uniformity the world over, in many matters, may certainly be more authoritatively made through the medium of a representative congress of scientific men of all nations than by any other means.

As regards the special occasion of founding the new organization, the advocates of doing so in America this summer maintain that another opportunity is not likely to soon re-occur so favorable as will be afforded by the meeting of the British association in Canada, followed immediately by that of the American association in Pennsylvania. If the scheme is carried out, it will, in fact, be the legitimate and anticipated culmination of a movement of which the coming to America of the British association is one part. In 1881 the proposal was made that the American association invite the British to America. This was actively discussed; and finally it was determined—largely,

I believe, from motives of real modesty—to postpone the invitation, and issue instead a large number of special requests to individuals to attend from abroad the meeting of our association at Montreal. This duty fell to the local committee of Montreal in 1882. The large number of foreign visitors who came revived the hope that the British association could be induced to come over as a body. The matter was then independently taken up by the Canadians, and pushed generously and eagerly towards the great success which every one now anticipates for the gathering at Montreal. From the first it has been understood, that if the original enterprise, which was in many ways so full of difficulty, should be brought to a successful issue, then the still greater enterprise should be broached, and the foundation of a permanent international association be attempted.

It is hoped that the British association will take some action in the matter. It has been suggested that a committee with powers might be appointed to confer with the American association at Philadelphia. The organization of the latter body is such that no further official action on its part is possible until the time of meeting itself; but there can be no doubt as to the cordiality with which any proposal emanating from the British association will be received. At present no definite plans have been formed, as it has been felt that public discussion was necessary before making any decision; but, as it is advisable to gather as many suggestions beforehand as possible, I shall be glad to correspond with any one interested in the proposal.¹

CHARLES S. MINOT.

THE IMPLEMENTS OF THE IGLOO.

IN my former article on the igloo of the Inuit, published in *Science* last August and September, I said, in closing, "I should like to give a few brief descriptions of those appurtenances that might be strictly called igloo accessories, as the native stone lamp and kettle, the well to fresh water through the thick ice

beside the snow-hut, and many other minor items all growing out of the igloo itself; but this article has already grown to such dimensions that they must be laid aside." A letter from the editor, requesting to know more about the life of the Eskimos among whom I was thrown, has induced me to take up my abandoned subject as an appendix to my former article about the igloo itself.

The snow-stick, called by the Eskimos ah-now'-tuk, is a constant companion of the igloo, and is used to knock the snow off of the reindeer clothes or bedding, when by any chance it has gotten on them. After the igloos are built, when camping on a sledge-journey, the reindeer-skins that are to form the bedding are given a beating with the ah-now-tuk as they are taken from the sledge, before being put in the snow-house; and this beating must be very thorough if there has been a high wind with drifting snow during the day, or the sledge has upset, or any mishap has occurred to fill the hair with snow or ice. When a hunter comes into an igloo from the chase or a journey, he takes off his outer reindeer-coat (coo'-le-tah) and outer trousers (kok'-liks), both with their hair turned *outwards*; and, if there be any snow or ice on them, a few dexterous strokes with the snow-stick soon rids them of it, when they are carefully rolled up and put at the foot of the bed, or, if the native is going to retire for the night, under his head as a pillow. When severe exercise brings on profuse perspiration, this is taken up by the inner reindeer-clothes, with their hair turned *inwards*, in the shape of an evenly distributed moisture, which, in thick fur especially, seldom reaches to the skin itself; and, when these clothes are taken off for the night, this freezes into a hoar-frost-like covering, which is beaten off by the ah-now-tuk in the morning, before they are resumed. Sometimes it is impossible to thoroughly get rid of this sabulous ice, and nothing is more disagreeable to an explorer than to crawl out of a warm sleeping-bag in the morning, and crawl into this powdery ice still clinging to the fur of the inner clothes; but there is nothing to be done but to grin and bear it for the few short minutes it takes to warm the fur with the bare skin of the body.

The ah-now-tuk itself can be any sort of handy club that one can wield with the right hand, while the clothes, bedding, etc., are held in the left:¹ but there is usually a particular

¹ [Dr. Minot's address is 25 Mt. Vernon St., Boston, Mass.—Ed.]

¹ I have spoken of the Inuit as *right-handed*. In connection with this remark, I think it would not be uninteresting to reproduce a small portion of my address before the New-York academy of sciences, Nov. 1, 1880, relating to the ambidexterity of the Inuit. I there said, "I have often been impressed with the